

Two Questions,

Viz.

- I. *Whether an account of the Work of Grace is to be required of those that are Admitted to full Communion in the Church?*
- II. *Whether the whole Church is to be Judge thereof?*

Judiciously Answered.

By Mr. Thomas Shepard, sometimes a famous
Pastor of the Church of Cambridge,
in New-England.

Heb. 13. 7.
*Remember them who have spoken to you, the
word of God, whose faith follow.*

BOSTON in N. E.

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1697.

TWO

to be reported of the
Committee to the Church

the whole Church is to be

Indicatory Answered

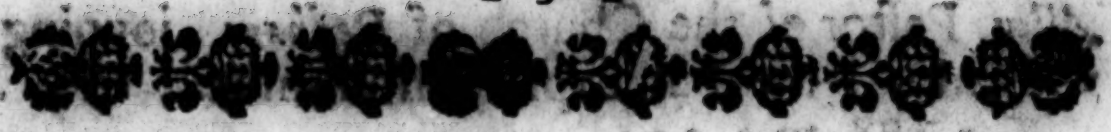
By Mr. James
Prison of the London of Cambridge

From the London of Cambridge

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James B. B. B. B.
Mar. 11. 1858

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THERE is lately Published a Letter Written by the famous Mr. Shepard, Pastor of the Church in Cambridge, bearing date April 25. 1645. which was (as himself layes) written in *Extreme haste*, and that he was not *Thetical* or Positive in any thing therein affirmed by him ; he doth acknowledge that a Confession of a work of Justifying faith is Necessary, and what the Apostles required of all those whom they admitted as Members ; but an account of the manner of working this work, he supposeth ought not to be insisted on : which Assertions are weighty Truths. But that no wrong may be done to the Memory of that Worthy man by any misrepresentation or misunderstanding of his Judgment concerning these points, It has been thought needful to Republish what himself did after this Letter was (as is pretended) written, upon much deliberation in Print declare to the World. *Viz.* in his defence of the nine Positions, in Answer to Mr. Balt, which was first Printed in the year 1648. (the year before Mr. Shepards Death) and the Preface to it subscribed, November 28. 1648. which was seven Months after the Letter mentioned. Now therein (the Reverend Mr. John

Allin, Pastor of the Church of Dedham, joyning with him) he thus expresseth himself.

V. p. 188. to p. 195.

We shall declare our selves with as much brevity as we may, to the two Branches of the question.

First, *Whether the Members of the Church are called to give an account of the work of Grace at their admission thereunto.*

Secondly, *Whether the whole Church is to be judge hereof.*

Whether the Members of the Church be called, &c.

For answer to which we shall express our selves in these particulars, to prevent mistakes.

First, That the Question is not of what may keep a Church already constituted from being accounted no Church, but of what is to be required of such as joyne unto a Church, for a Church may be a true Church, and yet be very corrupt, (as is generally observed by Protestant Writers, both out of the examples of some Churches in the New-Testament, and that of the Old in the great Apostasie thereof) we think (in this same) Doctor *Fields*, expressions may be safely received : Some profess Christ (saith he) *but not wholly and intirely, as Hereticks : some profess the whole saving truth, but not in unity, as Schismatics : some profess it in unity, but not in sincerity, as prophane persons and Hypocrites : some in unity and sincerity : all these are partakers of the heavenly*

heavenly calling by profession of the truth, and consequently in some degree and sort the Church, &c. But we think that) this is no argument, that either Hereticks, Schismaticks, prophane persons, or Hypocrites (if convictively discovered) that such are meet matter to be joyned to a Church.

Secondly, When a work of Grace is required and desired of those who are to joyn to a Church, the meaning is not as if we allowed none to be of the Church, but *real Saints*, and such as give demonstrative evidence of being members of the invincible Church; for we profess (according to the Scripture, and general Doctrine of all Reformed Churches (whatever their practice be) that it is not *real*, but visible faith, not the inward being, but the outward profession of faith, (whence men are called visible Saints) that constitutes a visible Church, which faith so professed is called visible, not in the judgment of certainty, from such infallible signs of it, as may demonstrate the hidden being of it within; but in the judgment of charity which hopes the best. (1 Cor. 12. 7.) in the weakest Christian, and meanest profession, even when it sometimes fears the worst, and is not able at the present, to convince the contrary.

Thirdly, this judgment of charity (concerning the truth of anothers profession, or that which is called the work of grace) is to be regulated by the word, which Christ hath left

as a compleat rule, not only of faith, but also of love, and charity to guide both in their estate, acts unto their ends: and hence large professions and long relations of the work of grace (though full of exceeding glory, when humbly and prudently made) we exact not rigorously and necessarily of all, because the rule of charity directs us not so to judge; because many Christians may be drawn to Christ, and have a seed of faith, yet may sometimes not know it, sometimes remember not the working of it, sometimes through bashfulness, fear, want of parts, nor not trained up under a knowing Ministry) not be able to profess it so fully and clearly; hence also to keep out others from Communion out of groundless fears, that all their profession might be in hypocrisie, we allow not, because no man in his charity is to be ruled by his fears, but by the word; hence also to account any unfit for the Church, because their hearts cannot close with them, or because they like not their spirits, speak not with favour or any such like principles, and yet can give no rule or convicting argument from the word, why thus they do, we think it rigour, not charity regulated by the word; for humane charity doth not make Gods Church, but such persons which from God according to the rule of God, Charity is to receive, and therefore the rule is to be attended here: it is necessary to look for a ground of certainty to faith, but not for charity,

which

also which cannot be infallibly certain of another's
estate, and therefore upon a hopeful supposition
that the premises their profession is true, hope-
gracefully only make the conclusion.

The question being brought to this narrow, it
will here lye, viz.

First, *Whether profession of the work of grace, &
faith be not required of those that enter into the Church.*

Secondly, *With what profession of the work of grace
charity (according to a rule) is to rest satisfied.*

The first we think is writ with the beames of
the Sun, for it is evident, that neither the Lord
in the Old Testament, *Exod. 19.* or in the New
Testament, *Act. 2.* and in other like Scriptures,
did call for a profession of the *Doctrine* of faith
only, but especially of the work of faith; for
when the Lord promised to be a God to his
people, *Exod. 19. Deut. 29.* it was not with this
condition, if they did believe his word to be
true, &c. but if they will hear his voice, and
keep his Covenant, which (in a prepared peo-
ple) is a manifestation of a work of grace. So
when the Apostles were required to go preach
to all Nations, and baptize them and teach them,
look as they did require such a faith as was sa-
ving, (he that believeth shall be saved) so upon
the profession thereof they did receive them, as
also appears, *Acts 2. 38.* (which therefore could
not be of the doctrine of faith, for that the
Devils do, and tremble, and profane men of
much knowledge, may do, and yet unfit to be
received,

received, and therefore it was of the work of faith, and therefore *Acts* 8. 37. Philip not only requires faith, but a believing with all the heart of the *Eunuch*, and upon such a profession baptized him: and hence the Churches erected by the Apostles at *Corinth*, *Colosse*, *Ephesus*, &c. are called Saints, and sanctified of God in Christ Jesus, &c. How! was it because *debito* and *de jure* only, they should be so? then all who hear the Gospel (though they reject it) might be called a Church, for *de jure*, they ought to be so; Or was it because there were some that were truly such amongst them, and so in *concreto*, are called a Church and body of Christ? not only so, for there may be some visible Churches of visible Saints, and yet none among them of the invisible Church, unless any will think, that to be of the Church invisible is essential to the being and title of a visible Church: and therefore it was from their profession of saving faith which they maintained being a Church, as it was required to the gathering in to a Church: *John Baptist* also, (though he baptized none into a new Church, (and therefore might require the less) yet as he really promised remission of sins by the Messiah, so he required that very faith & repentance which might make them partakers of this heavenly benefit; and therefore, if what he required, they manifested by their profession, and confession of sins, it was not only to believe the doctrine of

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of faith, but a saving work of faith, which they held forth. And therefore it is not an outward profession of faith, according to a Creed which is required, for then a Papist is fit matter for a Church, nor willingness to hear the Word and receive the Sacraments, for then heaps of prophane persons are to be received into the Church, but it's profession of a work, and saving work of grace, which being ever required in the purest times, is no novell invention of some more rigidly inclined in these things.

To the second, with what profession (charity, according to rule) is to rest satisfied?

We answer, that there is a breadth in charity according to rule and profession of faith being but *testimonium humanum*, or a mans own testimony concerning himself, therefore as in the most eminent profession, *potest subesse falsum*, there may be hypocrisie latent, (it being no divine testimony) so in the weakest profession of the work of faith, *potest subesse verum*, id est, there may be truth in the bottom: hence (man leaving all secrets to God) the work of grace wherewith charity is to be satisfied, is one of these two. First, either with that which is only verbal, and appears to be false by conviction from the word: Or secondly, with that which appears to be real, which however it may be false, yet it is beyond the power of man to convince (by a rule) that so it is. We confess we are fearful as of opening the door too wide.

so of shutting the doors upon any whom God would have us to receive in, but for what yet we see or read, from the arguments here alledged in this Author, or the writings of others godly learned: we think that Church charity is not to rest satisfied with the first, but with the latter; for let the profession of the work of faith be never so short, or so weak, *let it be by their own immediate relation or by question*, yet if it may but appear to a regulated charity so as to hope that it is real, it is to rest satisfied then, till God make discovery to the contrary; we intend not to heap up Arguments, nor answer scruples, but these four things seem to evince as much.

1. That the Apostles in the 3000. converted, *Acts 2.* as they were very ready to receive them to the fold of Christ, and therefore in one day immediately received so many thousands (which could not be by large profession of every one) so also they attended to the truth of that profession, and therefore it was not bare profession of faith, but (as it is set down for our pattern) it was such a profession as was evidently joyned with humiliation, pricking at the heart, mourning, and crying out before the Apostles, *What shall we do to be saved*, gladly receiving the word, which are real testimonies of some real change from what they were but a little before, and upon this ground the Apostles received them.

2. The Apostles charge to *Timothy, 2 Tim. 3. 5.* From such as have a form of godliness and deny the

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the power of it, turn away ; if bare profession were sufficient, why should *Timothy* turn from them ? (but rather receive them who had a form of profession.) And if it was in his power to avoid them, why should he not reject them, and that not only from private but Church communion also, supposing them such as not onely had a form, but might be by a rule convinced thereof ? *Rev. 2. 2. and 3. 9.*

3. Lying and apparent untruth cannot make a man fit matter for a Church, and therefore cannot be a ground for charity to rest on, that so he is : but verbal profession, which appears not to be real but false, is palpable lying, and indeed more fit to destroy the Church then to make the Church. Hence *Sanctius* in *Zach. 14. 14.* observes that the greatest enemies of the Church are such, *qui cum fidem retineant sanctitatem abjecerunt.*

4. If bare profession of faith is a sufficient ground to receive men into the Church, than an excommunicate person cast out in one hour should be immediately received in again, if he will but renew his general profession of faith ; nay then the *Indians* in *Mary land*, who will put on and put off this profession, as their ghostly fathers the *Popish Priests* will bestow or withhold garments and shirts upon them ; should in charity be received into the Church.

But if it should be asked how charity may know the reality of this profession, we answer : so long as the rule be attended we leave every

one to the wisdom of Christ, to make application thereof, onely this we do add in general for more full satisfaction.

1. Such a faith professed with the mouth, which is confirmed by an innocent godly conversation in the life, so as not to live in commission of any known sin, or omission of any known duty, we say this conversation makes faith appear real, *James 2. 18. Rev. 22. 14.* we conceive more is required to make a man appear a fit member of a Church, then of a Common wealth, to be only *honus civis*, and bare civility is sufficient for this latter, but not for the former, and therefore such a profession of faith is needful, as is confirmed by a not only a civil, but a godly life.

2. Such a faith as is joyned with evident repentance, and sorrow, and mourning for sin, (although there be no experience always of such a holy life antecedently seen) for thus it was *Act. 2. 37, 38.* for the riches of Christs grace is such, as not only to receive experienced christians into his family and house, but also the weakest and poorest (who may stand in most need of Christs Ordinances) and that as soon as ever they seem to be brought in ; and therefore experience of a blameless life is not always necessary for admission into the Church : some think indeed that the Apostles received in the first converts, (*Act. 2. 39.*) so soon, because they had an extraordinary spirit of discerning,
but

but if they had so: yet they did not receive them in here according to that for they received divers hypocrites in, as *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, &c. and if all other of their acts in this chapter, were exemplary, why should this only be thought to be otherwise and extraordinary?

3. When there is full and sufficient testimony from others of their faith and piety, although their humiliation, faith and conversation be not so well known, for we see the Church received *Paul*, when *Barnabas* had declared what God had done for him; and if it may be just to condemn another by the testimony of two faithful witnesses, it may not be unchristian to receive an other into the fold of Christ (much more readily) upon the testimony of able and faithful Christians, especially then when they be not able openly, and publickly to speak so fully for themselves, and thus much for answer to the first Question.

2 Question, *Whether this profession is to be judged by the Church?*

Answer 1. The faithful as they did at first combine into a Church, so it is their duty to receive others to themselves, as the Church did, *Act. 9. 26, 27.* encouraged by *Barnabas* and the Apostles, and as the Apostle commands, *Rom. 14. 1.* which although it was of fellow-members into their affections, yet the proportion holds strong

strong for receiving commers into the Church,
Joh. Epb. 3. 8, 9, 10.

2. If they be to receive them, they must by some means know them, to be such as they may comfortably receive into their affections, a little leaven leavening the whole lump. *1 Cor. 5.*

3. The Officers of the Church, (who are first privately to examine them) and prepare them for admission) are to shew the Church the rule on which the Church is to receive them, and themselves are ready to admit them.

Acts 10. 37. Can any forbid water, &c.

4. This rule is best seen by that publick profession before the whole Church, and if no just exception be made (as none should be, without Conviction) they are to be admitted by the Officers with the consent of the Members hereunto; For if publick profession is needful at least before the Church, though not the world alwayes (as *Didoclarivus* observes) to the entrance into the Covenant and Church by baptism; we see no reason, but persons formerly baptized, and entering a new into the Church, but they should openly profess their faith again: the visible Church being built upon this rock, *Matth. 16. 16, 18. viz.* Profession of the faith of Christ; and lastly, if there should be no necessity for such a Profession, yet if this be desired of the People of God, for the increase of their own joy to see God glorified, and Christs Name professed, and his vertues held forth, and
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for the increase of their love to those that joyn with them, why should it not be done before Saints, which should be done before Persecutors ? 1 Pet 3. 15.

THese are *Mr. Shepards* words. And these were not his sudden indigested thoughts, but his Settled Judgment. And that thus did this faithful *Shepard* Instruct his Flock at *Cambridge*, in his Publick Ministry, is to be seen in his Sermons on the *Parable of the Ten Virgins*. p. 197. What the Sentiments of that Excellent Man, *Mr. Jonathan Mitchel*, *Mr. Shepards* immediate Successor, were, concerning the Controverted Questions, with his Argumentations about them, is to be seen in the Description of his Life, now in the Press.

F I N I S.

for the increase of their love to God, and to
with them, why should it not be done before
Sinner, which should be done before I sin.
cor 3 17.

These are Mr. Spang's words. And these
were not his in his undigested thoughts,
but his settled judgments. And of this will
this faithful Story tell. He was at the
bridge, in his Public Ministry, as we have seen in
his sermons on the bridge of the year 1777.
p. 177. Where the sentiments of his
Man, Mr. Jonathan Edwards, Mr. Spang and
mediate Successor, were concerning the
converted Questions, with his
there is to be seen in the
is laid now in the

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[Three lines from Heb. xiii.7.] | — || Boston in N. E. | Printed and
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